



DOG PARK COMMITTEE

UPDATE January 22, 2018

Introducing the Committee

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- Chair: Mike Perry
- Members:
 - ▣ Betsy Kristl
 - ▣ Clare Siska
 - ▣ Karen Martin
 - ▣ Tom Gillispie
- Associate Member:
 - ▣ Rodney Smith
- Advisor:
Cathy Fochtman,
Recreation Director
- BoS Liason:
Joan Gardner

Acton's Dog Population

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- Over 1,600 dog owners and over 1,900 registered dogs in Acton.
- Some owners use existing Town open spaces to exercise their dogs off-leash, but not all dogs are suited for off-leash outings.
 - ▣ Small dogs, puppies, dogs-in-training, disabled dogs
- Shared-use areas, such as Acton Arboretum and Great Hill, foster tensions between dog owners and non-dog-owners.

Committee's Initial Charge

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- Does Acton need, or would it benefit from, an enclosed, accessible dog park?
 - ▣ Reviewed literature
 - ▣ Contact with surrounding towns
 - ▣ Town committee feedback
 - ▣ Public opinion via committee presence at public events & online survey solicitation

Reviewed Literature

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- In general, dog parks are found to:
 - ▣ Provide opportunities for people to exercise
 - ▣ Decrease social isolation
 - ▣ Reduce the number of dogs in shelters
 - ▣ Improve environmental management (dog waste)
 - ▣ Promote acceptable dog behavior, decreased dog aggression, and responsible dog ownership
 - ▣ Increase understanding between dog owners and non-dog owners
 - ▣ Attract visitors (income) and new residents (tax base)

Discussions with Surrounding Towns

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- [FIDO of Natick](#) – classic example of town-community partnership to build a dog park.
- [MAYDOG](#) – 7 years from concept to completion. Well used 1/2 acre site is too small.
- [Chelmsford Dog Park](#) – 2+ acres; separate training area; organized activities; a community gathering place for dog owners and non-dog owners alike.
- Continued discussions with other Towns.

Town Committee Outreach

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- Commission on Disabilities – Supportive; cites benefits to disabled and isolated citizens
- Open Space – Overall positive response; likes the idea of alternate places to take dogs
- Land Stewardship – Open to helping establish a location
- Recreation – Actively engaged with committee
- RITE – Supports their mission to engage marginalized residents
- Conservation Commission – Enthusiastic, in favor!

Public Outreach

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- Committee Presence at Oktoberfest, Special Town Meeting, Acton's Transfer Station
- *Acton Beacon* article
- PSA on Acton TV
- Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ADPCAActon/
- Planned:
 - ▣ NARA Winter Carnival
 - ▣ AB Farmer's Market Community Table
 - ▣ And more...

Oktoberfest Presence

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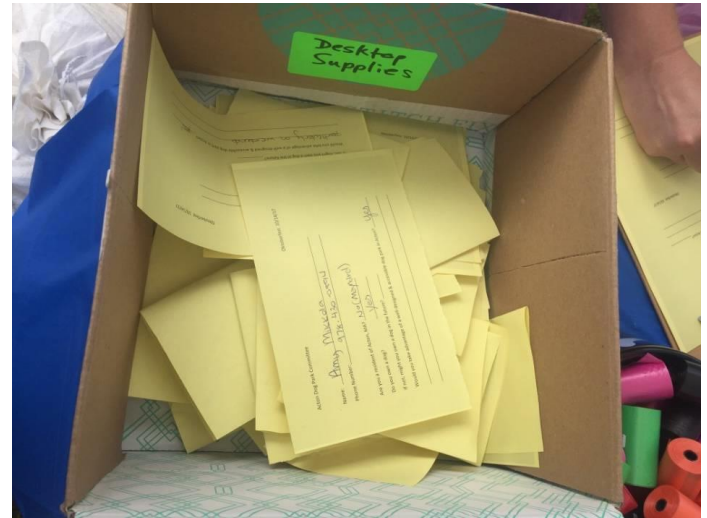
- Heavily visited table; positive visitor feedback
- Survey results:
 - ▣ 97 questionnaires returned in response to the question, “Would you support a dog park in Acton?”
 - ▣ ○ 87 YES
 - ▣ ○ 2 NO
 - ▣ ○ 5 MAYBE
 - ▣ ○ 3 no answer



Online Survey Results, Nov - Jan

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- 479 questionnaires returned to date
 - ▣ 64% of respondents own at least one dog
 - ▣ 13% of non-owners expect to own a dog in the future
 - ▣ 63% would use a dog park
 - ▣ 78% support the creation of a dog park in Acton
 - ▣ 159 respondents requested to be kept informed and/or are willing to be involved



A Well-Designed Dog Park

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- Welcoming, natural environment
- Minimum 2 acres, plus adequate parking
- Enclosed (fenced) and handicapped-accessible
- Potential Features:
 - Fresh water access
 - Waste receptacles
 - Seating areas
 - Shade elements
 - Walking trails
 - Separate areas for large & small dogs
 - Guidelines for use
 - Town supported
 - Community-group managed

Committee Conclusions & Next Steps

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- Sufficient interest and support exists in town for the committee to take the next steps:
 - ▣ Identify and address community concerns
 - ▣ Draft design and location requirements
 - ▣ Identify and review potential locations
 - ▣ Identify funding sources & begin raising funds
 - ▣ Continue community education and outreach
- We ask for your support and approval!!
- Questions?

References

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- [Beyond the Dog Park: Providing Community Benefits Via Innovative Off-Leash Recreation](#)
- [How cities may benefit from dog parks](#)
- [ODU News: Dog Park Research](#)
- [Dog Parks: Benefits and Liabilities](#)
- [Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance](#)
- [MRSC - Off-Leash Areas and Dog Parks: Planning and Policy](#)